

## How Tattoos and Brands Impact the Recovery of Sex Trafficking Victim: An Exploratory Study of Sex Trafficking Survivors.

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**Abstract :** This study explores the impact of tattoos and/or brands on the recovery of sex trafficking survivors. Many victims of sex trafficking are forced or coerced to take markings of ownership while in the sex trafficking trade in the form of painful tattoos or brands. As a result, victims who are rescued and in recovery often must live with permanent reminders of their traumatic experiences or are left to resort to expensive cosmetic or cover-up jobs, which for many are out of reach. As is often true of domestic violence victims who are left with scars from their abusers, the impact of these permanent markers can delay the healing process and contribute to post-traumatic stress. This study tells the story from the perspectives of the survivors of sex trafficking, how these specific permanent reminders impacted their healing. The study employs a thematic analysis of interviews with sex trafficking victims via focus group interviews.

**Keywords :** sex trafficking, tattoos, trauma, healing

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